DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 341 528 RC 018 542

TITLE Teacher and Administrator Training, Recruitment and Retention. INAR/NACIE Joint Issues Sessions National Indian Education Assocation (NIEA) Annual Conference (22nd, San Diego, California, October 15, 1990).

INSTITUTION Department of Education, Washington, DC. Indian Nations At Risk Task Force.; National Advisory Council on Indian Education, Washington, D.C.

PUB DATE 15 Oct 90

NOTE 10p.; In: The Indian Nations At Risk Task Force and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education Joint Issues Sessions Proceedings. See RC 018 538.

PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Academic Persistence; *Administrators; *American Indian Education; American Indians; Elementary Secondary Education; Hearings; Higher Education; *Labor Turnover; *Minority Group Teachers; Primary Sources; Racial Bias; *Student Recruitment; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Recruitment

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes two joint sessions held by the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education to hear testimony on Native American issues in educator training and employment. Issues and problems related to recruitment of Native Americans into teacher education include raised admission standards, more stringent requirements, culturally or linguistically biased admission tests, the lure of better paying professions, and eligibility requirements for financial aid. An effective Arizona recruitment program targets teacher aides with 2 years of college, while the Alaska state university system has special teacher education programs for Natives in villages and urban areas. Retaining Native students in teacher education is hampered by insufficient financial aid and by racism on campus and in the curriculum. The Mohawk Nation addresses this problem through a cooperative program in which university professors teach courses in the community on weekends. Problems in recruitment of Native teachers include lack of financial resources for on-site hiring procedures and lack of a centralized registry of certified Native teachers. Problems in teacher retention include long commuting distances for non-Native teachers who cannot live on the reservation; lack of retirement programs in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools; and low salaries, poor facilities, and increased responsibilities in tribal schools. Also discussed were issues of inservice training, administrator retention, Title V staff, dropout prevention, and racial bias of non-Native teachers. Recommendations are offered for each problem area. (SV)

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INAR/NACIE Joint Issues Sessions
NIEA 22nd Annual Conference - San Diego, California
October 15, 1990

"Teacher and Administrator Training, Recruitment and Retention"

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RC 018542

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INAR/NACIE Joint Issue Sessions
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Summary: "Teacher and Administrator Training, Recruitment, and Retention"

The first session on teacher and administrator training, recruitment, and retention was co-hosted by INAR Task Force member Joseph Ely and NACIE Council member Buck Martin. The second session on these issues was co-hosted by INAR Task Force member Janine Pease-Windy Boy and NACIE Council member Gloria Duus. The following issues, recommendations, and exemplary programs were discussed:

I. Recruitment for Teacher Training

Issues and Problems

- Raised admission standards and stringent requirements for entering teacher training programs make it more difficult for Native Americans to enter such programs. For example, Oregon is moving to a fifth-year program whereby teacher education candidates have to have a bachelors degree in a content area before they can enter teacher training programs.

- Required admission tests may also limit the number of Native Americans entering the field due to a language and cultural bias in the tests. On the Crow Reservation, 17 people have taken the National Teachers' Examination (NTE) and only two have passed. The other 15 candidates performed well in their college courses but were unable to pass the NTE because of their bilingualism.

- Competition between college majors means that many students are choosing to pursue professions other than teaching because teachers are paid less and have less stature in society. Current Native American teachers need to demonstrate through modeling that teaching is a real, viable, and important profession.

- Financial and other resources for teacher training programs are often wasted on people who do not return to the reservation.

- Attracting Native American people into teacher training programs is difficult due to several reasons: (1) Many Native American students drop out of high schools--particularly in urban areas--and prospective candidates are lost at an early age; (2) Many Native Americans do not have an enrollment number and thus are not eligible for needed scholarships.

- Many institutions are not willing to discuss who is or is not Indian and thus are granting Indian opportunities to non-Indians with falsified documents. Because many Indian students are not enrolled in a tribe, proof of Native American identity should be based on documentation of heritage.

Recommendations

- States should re-evaluate and reconsider teacher testing policies.

- Funding for higher education could serve as an incentive to encourage Native Americans to enter teacher training programs. More scholarship money should be made available, especially for the adult learner who is committed to bringing services back to the reservation.

- To encourage greater participation in teacher training programs, colleges could bring courses to students on the reservation.

- Active outreach by colleges is needed to attract Native Americans from urban areas.

Recruitment Programs that Work

- Prescott College in Prescott, Arizona has a center for bilingual teacher training financed by the Fund for Improvement for Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) under the U.S. Department of Education and also Title VII education, personnel, and training. Their pilot program, that began in the Tohono O'Odham Nation in 1985, targets teacher aides with two years of college. Most of these aides are adult women who have been working in the schools for 15 years.

- In Alaska, a Native Alaskan teacher caucus was established to share insights about the teaching profession with different communities. Furthermore, the state university system has a village and urban Excel program to promote Native educators.

II. Teacher Training Retention

Issues and Problems

- Sufficient financial aid is difficult to obtain, especially for students who are required to complete a fifth year of study.

- Racism on campus discourages current students. For example, at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, a required course on human diversity focuses on the strengths of other minority groups but ignores the important issues of Native Americans. The course paints a very tainted picture of Native American people by focusing only on alcoholism and ignoring issues such as treaty rights. Courses such as these need to present a more balanced picture of Indians. University faculty should make a bona fide attempt to deal with racism in the curriculum and the institution and to educate people about racism.

Recommendations

- Counseling and support services are needed to encourage students to persist in teacher training programs. An established connection between high school and college could help promote college persistence.

- Agreements need to be articulated between community colleges and four-year institutions so students can transfer without losing credits. Currently, students who transfer from community colleges to universities lose two-thirds of their credit hours. Additionally, a provision should be made for reciprocal certification requirements between states. Both of these agreements will broaden the base of teachers from which to draw and will lessen the burden on students.

Retention Programs that Work

- The Kahnawake Reserve of the Mohawk Nation in Canada has established a partnership with McGill University to create a teacher training program called "Certificate in Native and Northern Education." This and similar programs in the Province of Quebec fall under the First Nation's Education Council and are federally-funded by the Department of Indian Affairs. This is a grassroots program in which professors come to the community to teach courses. Teachers serve as aides in the schools while taking courses on weekends and in the evenings. Administrators are trained on the job and are provided academic leave at a later time to complete their degrees.

- One Northwest affiliated tribe passed a resolution to create a task force to oversee some of the discrimination on campuses and public institutions that their tribal members attend.

III. Teacher Training Programs

Recommendations

- Teachers should be encouraged, or even required, to take courses with a multicultural emphasis to enable them to understand different cultures and to learn to deal with racism in their classrooms and schools. There is currently an effort by a Native American professor at the University of Oregon to develop a new teacher training program that is strongly multiculturally based. Individuals who have experienced multicultural courses develop a strong foundation in issues surrounding racism and stereotyping.

- For teachers intending to work on reservations, states should mandate a course specifically on Indian culture. There are currently at least four states that have Indian studies requirements for teachers, but the courses need to be examined and refined.

- Teacher training programs should include internships at the undergraduate level to show district personnel offices that we do have Native Americans in college who are training to become teachers.

- College students who are training to be teachers should be assigned to Title V programs as tutors to begin to understand the students, their needs, and the skills needed to reach those students.

- Research opportunities and scholarships for academic research need to be available for Native American graduate students.

IV. Inservice Training

Issues and Problems

- Continued training in schools through inservice programs is restricted because schools--especially small schools--are limited in what training they can offer their staff.

Recommendations

- New teachers should be familiar with the local culture. As part of training, experienced teachers could be matched with new teachers to introduce them to the local area and culture.

- Inservice training is an important aspect of continued teacher training for all staff, including experienced teachers and tutors. Schools must offer programs of substance with documentation and evaluation. In Juneau, Indian education staff are involved in creating inservice programs for their schools.

- Often administrators are afraid of losing non-Indian teachers by requiring inservice training, and thus these teachers may not learn about racism and cultural insensitivity. Consequently, often those teachers who most need inservice training do not attend. Programs to promote cultural sensitivity should be required of all teachers.

V. Teacher Recruitment

Issues and Problems

- Small, rural districts with limited financial resources cannot conduct on-site recruitment and often interview and hire school staff over the telephone. This presents a problem for both the schools and the teachers: schools are uncertain as to whom they are hiring, and teachers are uncertain as to whom they will be working for.

- Currently there is no centralized place to find qualified Native American or Alaskan Native teachers. Schools have to spend several hundred dollars in advertising and calling universities where there are high concentrations of Native American students.

Recommendations

- The establishment of a Native American teacher clearinghouse would help schools looking to fill positions.

- Districts can attract certified teachers by providing a commitment to hire students upon completion of their certification requirements.

VI. Teacher Retention

Issues and Problems

- In some districts, the closest teachers live 50 miles away from the school. This discourages teachers because transportation is expensive and no reimbursement is provided by the schools. This is particularly a problem for non-tribal members who are not able to move into HUD homes on the reservations without receiving waivers and completing other paperwork.

- Visits by the Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP) are often negative and demoralizing to school staff because OIEP staff do not understand the situation of the school. OIEP staff are critical of the academic achievement of students, basing their assessment on standardized tests that do not consider certain strengths of the students such as cultural and language backgrounds. It is very difficult to keep morale high under these circumstances.

- Tribal schools are unable to retain qualified teachers because the BIA does not provide Bureau-funded schools with retirement systems. Often teachers looking for higher pay and retirement programs leave to work for public schools.

- It is difficult for tribal schools to recruit and retain qualified teachers when they are held hostage to the federal budget. One school in Idaho reported a significant increase in student population while being threatened with a 35% budget cutback. Furthermore, Bureau schools start out at a greater disadvantage, receiving less money per student than public schools. Idaho ranked 48th or 49th in their funding of public education, and the Bureau schools received $400 less per student than Idaho public schools.

- Poor educational facilities discourage teachers from accepting or retaining jobs in some schools because the public schools offer better facilities.

- Teachers in tribal schools often have more responsibilities than teachers in public schools. In public schools, teachers start their work at 8:00, prepare for the day, and leave at 3:30 after correcting their papers. In BIA schools, the teachers get up at 6:00 to drive the school busses, teach their classes, and then remain to lead extra-curricular activities. On the weekends they are called to drive the busses to football games or perform other such duties.

- Teachers unfamiliar with the school and community often face culture shock and leave a school within a year.

Recommendations

- Compensation or arrangements such as free carpools or vans should be provided for teachers living far away from the schools.

- A nation-wide retirement system should be established to allow teachers to transfer anywhere within the Bureau system. However, a few bugs need to be worked out before the federal government should be put in charge of a retirement plan because people in other federal areas have lost their retirements due to changing regulations.

- Teachers need access to resources so they feel prepared to perform their jobs. A network or a center for materials in each state could be established. Great Falls Public Schools in Montana has a very diversified and comprehensive learning resource center that could serve as a model for other such centers.

- Schools should question prospective teachers about their commitment to Native American students and their willingness to live and participate in the community to ensure they are hiring teachers who will continue to work in the school.

- Grant money should be available for effective, established retention programs.

Programs and Strategies that Work

- The American Indian Education Commission of the Los Angeles Unified School District is accepted by the school district and recognized directly under the Board of Education. Thus, Native American teachers have a voice in the school district. Each school district could organize a similar commission of Native American teachers.

- The Navajo Community College in Tsaili, Arizona takes teachers on tours to familiarize them with the Navajo people. They brought teachers to into Canyon de Chelly to give them a first-hand experience of what the Navajo people have gone through to survive, and plan on bringing them to Farmington, New Mexico where the Navajo people supposedly originated. These experiences should help decrease the culture shock often felt by teachers.

- The Four Winds Tribal School has negotiated a contract with the U.S. Department of Education to provide financial incentives to those teachers who have 50% of their students with academic achievement at grade level.

- A public school in New Mexico established a training and retention program and a support group with P.L. 874 funds. The program provides a cultural orientation for every new teacher in the district and allows them to meet once a month with an experienced teacher. In conjunction with the University of New Mexico, the program brought in different cultural activities, classroom activities, and computer training. Furthermore, they provided basic support helping teachers find laundromats, grocery stores, and other such places. The district used P.L. 874 funds to pay for substitute teachers on training or meeting days.

VII. Administrator Retention

Problems

- Administrators, especially in small, rural areas, are often overwhelmed with added duties such as driving busses, fixing toilets, and cooking breakfast. Principals are told the importance of being an effective leader in the classroom, but in small areas there are no secretaries or clerks and thus the principals are inundated with many tasks and reports.

- Schools that employ the Department of Defense pay scale pay higher salaries to teachers and counselors than to administrators because the pay scale does not apply to administrators. This unbalanced salary rate serves as a disincentive for administrators.

- Administrators, like teachers, experience culture shock in unfamiliar communities.

Recommendations

- Additional compensation is needed to motivate administrators.

- "Leadership in Tribal Colleges," an AHEC program, is a good program for training and retaining people in administrative jobs.

VIII. Title V Staff

Issues and Problems

- Political pressures are sometimes put on Title V staff who do not conform to the politics of the school administration. There is a conflict between the administration's objectives and Title V staff evaluation of the needs of the students. Eventually these staff members either leave the system or conform to the administration.

- In urban schools, Title V is often the only program that serves as an advocate for the students and family; provides general basic skills, tutoring, or remediation for students that don't fall under other categorical programs; provides cultural instruction and counseling; and institutes staff development and curriculum development to make classroom environments more positive for Native American students. It is because of all these functions that Title V staff are under so much stress.

Recommendations

- Indian education programs need their own administrations with staff who are sensitive to the students' needs.

IX. Other Issues

Dropout Prevention

- Students receive their endowment or allotment of funds when they reach 18 years of age. Upon receipt of this money, many students drop out of high school. In a few years when the money is gone they come back to work towards their GED, a degree that has become so watered-down it is barely valid to the real world. As an incentive to graduate from high school, students should not receive any endowment until after they successfully complete their high school graduation requirements.

- Delinquent students should have a place to report in the evenings where live-in staff provide a structure, enforce rules, and help these students complete high school.

- Staff of boarding schools can help students persist in school by serving as surrogate parents and providing a secure place within a structure for the students to function.

Health, Wellness, Substance Abuse Prevention

- We need to solve problems of student alcohol and drug addiction by providing adequate counseling, treatment, and role models.

Standardized Testing

- Standardized tests are inadequate as measures of student growth. Native American students probably progress more quickly than the majority of society's students in English language skills and other standard American middle-class achievement considering they start below white children. Native American students do well in school even though their achievement scores may show them one or two years behind other children. It is necessary that we develop tests that are not solely dependent upon academic achievement.

Racism

- Students face blatant racism in their classes. In one district in Northwest Washington, high school students were required to take a class in Pacific Northwest history. Because teachers could use supplementary materials that did not have to be reviewed by a curriculum board, some teachers were using materials that were extremely racist and sexist. One unit called "Mountain Men and Their Women" talked about Indian fathers selling their daughters in rendezvous with the mountain men in return for a new rifle or a horse. The young girls

supposedly agreed to this because of their low status as women. The students in this class were required to give corresponding answers on tests despite the inaccuracies and bias of the lessons. Similarly, one teacher showed a movie and clapped every time an Indian got killed.

- Schools should review curriculum materials to ensure they are not racist or offensive to Native American teachers or students.

Other

- "Workforce 2000" does not include Indians and thus policies are being made about the work force, higher education, vocational-technical, and two-year institutions without the input of Indians.